



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
CONNECTICUT STATE LIBRARY

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Testimony of
Kendall F. Wiggin, State Librarian

Concerning Proposed H. B. No. 5614

AN ACT CONCERNING "E-BOOKS" AND LIBRARIES.

General Law Committee

February 7, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Doyle, Representative Baram, and distinguished members of the General Law Committee. My name is Kendall Wiggin and I am the Connecticut State Librarian. I am here to speak in support of H.B. 5614.

For more than 100 years libraries have been acquiring books through purchase and gifts and loaning them to the residents of Connecticut. Last year Connecticut's public libraries loaned over 20 million books and magazines. Libraries are able to easily acquire and loan printed books because they are copyrighted and sold. Libraries are not, however, able to acquire and loan eBooks in the same way. Why? Because eBooks are licensed just as the software on your computer or tablet is. You don't own that software and libraries don't own their eBooks. To use that software you were required to agree to a license agreement that you probably didn't understand and which severely limits what you can do with that software. If you won't agree to the license you cannot use the software. Today some of the biggest publishers will not license their eBooks to libraries. Some will license them to libraries, but under terms that are less than favorable to libraries.

Public Libraries provide a public good by making information freely available to all – regardless of age, ethnicity, educational level, or income. Equity of access is a core value of libraries. It shouldn't matter what format the content comes in – including digital.

For public libraries to continue to meet the information needs of their communities they need a level playing field in the eBook market place. The Connecticut Library Association is proposing changes to this bill which I support. These changes would go a long way toward improving access to eBooks for all the residents of our state by addressing the inequities libraries are facing in the market place while at the same time protecting the interests of publishers and authors.

I look forward to working with the Committee, the Connecticut Library Association and others to insure that the public's access to information through libraries is not abridged and that public libraries continue to play an important role in building literate and knowledgeable communities.